

Lesson 8

MOSES IN EGYPT

Bible Readings: Exodus 1:1-3:12; Hebrews 11:23-29

When you come to the end of Genesis you come to the end of Joseph's life. Turn the page to Exodus and you come to the beginning of Moses' life. But make sure you realize that as you turn that single page you advance about **400 years**. That's how much time passed between Joseph and Moses. During all of this time the Israelites, the descendants of Jacob, lived in Egypt. During the beginning of this period the Israelites apparently enjoyed the good favor of the Egyptians, probably because they remembered Joseph's important role in getting them through the famine.

But you can tell things aren't going to go well when you read the first lines of Exodus 1:8. "Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph came to power in Egypt." This new king saw how well the Israelites were doing and how large a group they had become, and he got very worried that the Israelites might join with Egypt's enemies to overthrow them. To make sure that didn't happen he made slaves of the Israelites and made their lives very difficult with hard service. When that didn't reduce the number of Israelites he ordered all the male babies to be killed right after birth. The hard slavery and death of their male babies brought tremendous sorrow and grief to the people.

The Birth of Moses

At this dark time in Israel's history a child was born who became the nation's deliverer. His name dominated Jewish history for the next 120 years and appears throughout the Bible.

Moses' father was Amram and his mother was Jochebed. They were from the tribe of Levi. After Moses was born his mother hid him from Pharaoh's murderers for about three months, but couldn't hide him any longer. So Jochebed took some reeds from the river and wove a basket which she then covered with tar and pitch to make it waterproof. She put the baby Moses in this "ark" and set it among the reeds in the Nile River. She then had Moses' older sister Miriam hide among the reeds to see what would happen.

Moses In Pharaoh's Home

Pharaoh's adult daughter came to the Nile River to bathe and saw the little "boat". She had one of her maids get it for her and immediately recognized that the baby inside was one of the Jewish children. She was moved by the cries of the child and decided to take him home. At this point Miriam came from her hiding place and offered to get a Jewish woman to serve as the child's nurse, or nanny. When Pharaoh's daughter agreed, Miriam went home and got her mother. So Jochebed nursed her son and was paid to take care of her own baby. During these earliest years of Moses' life she raised him and taught Moses that he was an Israelite, not an Egyptian, and taught him to worship God.

But because he was treated as a son by Pharaoh's daughter, Moses enjoyed all the privileges and education of a prince of Egypt. This gave him a real advantage later in his life when God called him to lead Israel.

Marriage of Moses

When Moses was forty years old and enjoying life as a prince of Egypt he was walking among the Israelites. Inside he felt a strong connection to his own people and a real grief about their sufferings. He saw an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Jewish slave and became so angry that he killed the Egyptian and hid his body in the sand. The next day he saw two of his own countrymen fighting and tried to stop them. But one of the men said, "Who made you a prince over us? Are you going to kill one of us like you did that Egyptian?" This made Moses realize that he had been seen killing that Egyptian and could easily be reported to Pharaoh, which would place his life in jeopardy. So he fled Egypt immediately and went out into Midian, also known as the Sinai Peninsula. He sat down by a well to rest, and a short time later seven young ladies came to water their father's flocks. When some shepherds arrived and tried to drive the ladies away Moses came to their rescue and protected them. When the girls told their father what had happened he insisted they bring Moses home. He invited Moses to live with them, gave him one of his daughters, Zipporah, as a wife, and hired Moses to be his shepherd.

God Calls Moses

One day, 40 years later, while Moses was watching over his father-in-law's flocks out in the wilderness he saw a burning bush. He went to take a closer look and saw that although the bush burned it was not consumed. Then a voice spoke to Moses from the bush and told him to take off his shoes; the place where he was standing was holy ground. God told Moses that he had heard the cries of his people, and that Moses was to go back into Egypt and order Pharaoh to let the Israelites go free.

At first Moses resisted God's instructions, but eventually he agreed to go. To help him, God gave Moses three miraculous signs. First, when Moses threw his staff on the ground it became a snake, but when he grabbed it the snake turned back into his staff. Second, when Moses put his hand into his robe and pulled it out his hand was covered with leprosy. But when he put it in and took it out a second time it was restored to a healthy hand. Finally, when Moses poured out water on the ground it turned to blood.

God gave these three miracles to Moses to show the Israelites that he wasn't just a crazy person who wanted to be their leader. God had sent him. These miracles would prove God was behind Moses' leadership. The Lord also told Moses that his older brother Aaron would be Moses' spokesperson.

Moses was 80 years old at this point, and he immediately headed back into Egypt. He met Aaron, his older brother, along the way. God had already told Aaron to go meet his younger brother and work under Moses' leadership. Together they went to tell Israel that God was going to deliver them from the Egyptians. The people were very pleased at this news.

A Dispensation Completed

We see that now the dispensation of Promise has come to an end. God gave Abraham and his descendants a command: Go to Canaan and live there. But on several occasions they left Canaan and went to Egypt. Finally, the whole family moved to Egypt and lived there as if it were their home. Therefore God judged them with almost 400 years of slavery to the Egyptians. But God is gracious, and even in this judgement he showed his care for them. Throughout those 400 years they grew from a family of 70 people to a nation of 2-3 million people. That kind of growth probably never could have happened in Canaan.

Now we see that God has raised up Moses to deliver his people and to lead them back to Canaan. He is always faithful!

Lesson 8 Questions

1. How many years between the end of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus?
2. Why was the new king of Egypt afraid of the Jews?
3. What did Pharaoh do to reduce the number of Israelites?
4. What tribe was Moses from?
5. How did the baby Moses escape from being killed by Pharaoh's men?
6. Did Moses know that he was an Israelite?
7. Who gave Moses his name?
8. How long did Moses live in Pharaoh's household?
9. Why did Moses leave Egypt?
10. How long did Moses spend taking care of his father-in-law's sheep in the wilderness?
11. What was the name of Moses' wife?
12. What miracle did God use to call Moses?
13. What three miracles did God give Moses to show the Israelites?

What did Moses choose instead of the pleasures of sin?